

Regional Sediment Management

Thank you, Ty Wamsley, Lynn Martin, Anne Sudar, Larry Cocchieri and all the others who worked behind the scenes to make this important sediment management conference a success... and I know it will be! Also a thank-you to everyone who took time from busy schedules to join us for these few intense days. We have a very diverse group with us – Corps, other Federal agencies, state agencies, port authorities, our watershed partners and others. A very special “Welkom” to our colleagues from the Netherlands. With nearly 100 participants from the Corps, other federal agencies, state agencies and other stakeholders, this should prove to be a most interesting conference, indeed. Take the time to meet the other attendees and get to know each other better, as effective regional sediment management requires a team effort.

We are here to discuss regional sediment management, but the Corps has many diverse missions ranging from rebuilding Iraq, to supporting the soldier in the field, to responding to disasters worldwide, to restoring and protecting the environment. In fact, there is no other federal agency that touches every American in as many ways as we do. A quick look at the Corps’ major mission areas:

- ***Water Resources*** --Creating synergy between water resources development and environment.
- ***Environment***--Restoring, managing and enhancing ecosystems, locally and regionally, and many that have national value to everyone.
- ***Infrastructure***--Building and sustaining the critical facilities for military installations plus our landside and waterside civil works projects.

- ***Homeland Defense***-- Supporting national homeland security missions; protecting critical infrastructure and rapidly deploying teams for response to local, national and global disasters..
- ***Warfighting***--Providing full spectrum engineering, construction and contingency support for our servicemen and women worldwide, including taking part in the Global War on Terrorism.

To be an even better steward of water resources, the Corps of Engineers has a powerful Strategic Plan to serve the nation. Some key elements include:

- Sustainability – Mission, Environment and Community
- Approach – Local, Regional and Ecosystem Management of Natural Resources
- Commitment – Focus that meets today’s needs and anticipates tomorrow’s challenges

The objectives of this conference parallel these strategic goals perfectly and in the next few days we will work to meld the two together.

Regional Sediment Management. What exactly does it mean to look at sediment management from the regional perspective? It forces us to get away from a myopic view of an individual channel. We start to involve stakeholder interests beyond navigation and flood control, such as environmental restoration and shore protection. It helps us think “outside the box” when we look at sediment as a valuable resource rather than “dredge spoil” to come up with unique ways of using it to benefit others. Together, we can work together on several objectives:

- Holistic focus on water problems and opportunities
- Attention to watershed as logical geographic area for managing water resources.
- Systems approach for analyzing problems and solutions
- Collaboration, partnerships and teamwork for developing and implementing solutions
- Emphasizing efficiencies to achieve more within existing resources.

A balanced watershed approach allows us to leverage the knowledge and others' financial resources to accomplish our overall broad strategic objectives—not just the Federal government's.

Project management in the Corps requires systems thinking, integrated water resources planning and management, and decision making attuned to environmental sustainability, economic prosperity, and social and cultural benefits.

We know that partnerships are critical across government levels and with the private sector to balance objectives and to better leverage resources to achieve mutually beneficial ends.

So while you are here, take time to meet new people, to share ideas, to discuss issues, explore different viewpoints and learn from each other.

A major focus over the next few days will be communications -- internal communication, external communication and relationships, technical issues, successes and challenges from the past, financing, innovations, and other topics of interest. This will help us forge closer relationships and allow us to develop more effective solutions together.

We need to share – knowledge and experience. We need to learn from each other... This afternoon, a special treat -- Comments from our Dutch colleagues on Regional Sediment Management in the Netherlands.

You care about regional sediment management. I care about Regional sediment management. Project opponents often comment on what they perceive to be sediment MISmanagement. It is NOT about sediment management alone, but about managing water resources and associated waterways... Ultimately, it is about serving the American public even better than we do today. We need to keep setting the bar higher.

(Economics) Ports mean jobs—in our local, regional and national economies. It is not only longshoremen or cargo transport on the docks. Our global economy means we need to ship and receive goods overseas. Retailers need to sell imported goods. All the major ports along our great coastlines and inland waterways fuel the engine of our economy. People do not even think about where an orange was grown or where their shoes were made. The world community is made up of interdependent nations... nations who buy and sell from each other.

- Supporting navigation by maintaining and improving channels was one of the Corps of Engineers' earliest Civil Works mission, dating to Federal laws in 1824 authorizing the Corps to improve safety on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and several ports around the country.
- Today, the Corps maintains more than 12,000 miles (19,200 km) of inland waterways and operates 235 locks. These waterways -a transportation system of rivers, lakes and coastal bays improved for commercial and recreational vessels - carry about 1/6 of the Nation's inter-city freight, at a cost per ton-mile about 1/2 that of rail or 1/10 that of trucking. The Corps also maintains 300 commercial harbors, through which pass 2 billion tons of cargo a year, and more than 600 smaller harbors. These harbors also directly support our soldiers in far off lands. With more than 13 million American jobs dependent on our import and export trade, these ports are vital to our economic security.
- In the northeastern states we have (5) major strategic ports, 415 million tons of commerce, 20% of all US cargo (Boston, New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia/Camden, Baltimore, Norfolk) and we maintain 2685 miles of navigation channels including sections of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway.

We cannot provide for our security, economy and waterborne transportation without dredging. Our dredging mission cannot be successful without managing sediment, not only at its destination but along the way and all the way back to its source.

(Environment) From an environmental perspective, the public often misunderstands what dredged material is. They confuse it with chemical waste, Superfund sites, medical waste and garbage. Sometimes it is laden with pollutants from past business practices, but most of the time it can be used for beneficial purposes, to build wildlife habitats (Hart-Miller Islands, Craney Island), to nourish recreational beaches or to create new land masses for commercial or military purposes. Other uses include:

- Improving aquatic habitat
- Restoring fish spawning habitat
- Ecosystem Restoration

(Homeland Security) Our ports also play a vital role in our national defense and support of democracy worldwide. Practically all the heavy equipment and supplies bound for Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm and the current activities in the Gulf region—soldiers and equipment—are moved by ship through ports maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' civil works program. Regional sediment management will continue to play a vital role in ensuring good port and navigation channel management. This, by extension, is essential to the defense of the nation.

One key challenge I have for all of you today is to work together and ensure that the public receives accurate information on the steps we are taking to manage sediment in a responsible manner.

I'd like to read something to you. As I do, think from a regional perspective:

Conservationists React to Bush Administration's Pledge to Deepen Columbia River Channel, 8/12/2004 7:58 PM

Dredging and disposal operations will harm fish and wildlife habitat such as shallow water wetlands and tidelands critical to salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act, as well as crab and sturgeon. Twelve threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead populations use the lower Columbia at some point in their life history. Dredging the channel will also exacerbate existing water quality problems by revealing and re-suspending the pollutants into the water.

"The region has been working together to restore the Columbia River estuary for salmon and wildlife for years now," said Moryc. "We simply cannot roll back these efforts by destroying essential salmon habitat with an economically wasteful and environmentally harmful project."

Now think about what I said at the beginning. Regional sediment management forces us to get away from a myopic view of an individual channel. If we look at sediment as a valuable resource rather than "dredge spoil" we can come up with unique ways of using it to benefit others, such as the salmon interests, while ensuring vital waterways remain open for our economy, national defense and recreation.

Opinions are formed from what the public sees on television and reads in the newspaper. Our success is directly linked to the information the public receives. It needs to be complete, accurate and science-based to earn initial public support. But in the long-term, our mutually developed solutions must be safe and effective to earn the public's respect.

As I said before, take time to meet new people, especially those with a different area of interest or viewpoint. Share ideas, discuss issues, explore each viewpoint and learn from each other. This will help ensure that we all meet this conference's primary objectives, and more importantly, the national objectives of better sediment management for all.

This is not the only opportunity to work together on sediment management. Keep your eyes open. One that comes to mind is in Wilmington, Delaware next month, sponsored by the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary. There are representatives here from other organizations around the country. As you meet and greet, talk to them about their upcoming workshops.

We all have the same expectations for the next few days.... The Corps identifies itself as a learning organization and we are looking forward to learning from each other—and have fun—New York is a great city. Thank you for coming. Now let's get to work.